

Planning Committee C		
<b>Report Title</b>	'Access for All' improvements at Grove Park Railway Station, Baring Road SE12	
<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>NO</b>	
<b>Ward</b>	Grove Park	
<b>Contributors</b>	Suzanne White	
<b>Class</b>	PART 11, Class A, Schedule 2 (GPDO)	18 November 2014

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This item relates to an application for prior approval that was withdrawn by the applicant, Network Rail, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September. As an application for station improvements that generated significant public interest, it was considered appropriate to update Members on the outcome of the application as an information item.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked: To note the content of the report.

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The application was for prior approval not planning permission. The relevant legislation against which it would have been considered was The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended).

## 4. Background

- 4.1. The application sought prior approval for the siting and design of works to install lifts, stairs and a replacement bridge at Grove Park Station in order to bring the station facilities in line with the Equality Act.
- 4.2. The application for prior approval was reported to Committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014. A copy of the Committee Report is appended to this report.
- 4.3. In response to representations received earlier that day from residents, requesting that alternative plans be put forward, the Committee resolved:

*“that in respect of town planning application DC/14/86845, that a decision be deferred for six weeks pending further consultation with Network Rail on the alternative proposals set forward by local residents.”*

## 5. Consultation update

- 5.1. On the 17<sup>th</sup> September, a petition of 1,139 signatures was received, which called on the Council to intercede with Network Rail to ensure an alternative Access for All Plan was considered for Grove Park Station.

- 5.2. To date, 25 other objections have been received in response to the scheme. This compares with 15 received at the time that the application was reported to Committee in July.

## **6. Alternative options assessment**

- 6.1. In conjunction with their letter withdrawing the application, Network Rail submitted a Briefing Note, dated 17<sup>th</sup> September, responding to the request from Committee Members to provide further information on the option selection process.
- 6.2. The note also provides feedback on a consultation event held by Network Rail in May and considers the possibility of introducing a subway tunnel instead of replacing the footbridge and of changing the proposed materials to address concerns. This information was also provided as part of an earlier Briefing Note and is considered under Section 6 of the 17<sup>th</sup> July Committee Report (attached).

## **7. Project Options Assessment**

- 7.1. The briefing note provides an overview of the options considered to improve access at Grove Park Station. Under the legislation, an LPA can only refuse prior approval or impose conditions where they are satisfied that the *“development ought to be and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land”*. This options appraisal would therefore have been of relevance to the determination of the application, had it not been withdrawn.
- 7.2. The options appraisal process began in 2005 with a feasibility study of three options completed by ARUP for the Strategic Rail Authority. In August 2007 Mott MacDonald produced a report considering five options, with further variations. Network Rail produced a further options assessment, Option Selection Report DfT “Access for All” Programme Grove Park Station, in June 2011. Each of these reports are included as appendices to the briefing note and illustrations are provided for most options. The briefing note forms part of the application documents and is available to view on the online planning application file.
- 7.3. Officers have identified nine broad options from these reports, which are described in brief below.

Option 1 - replacement of the existing footbridge with a new bridge with 3 no. lifts. The ramps to platforms 2/3 and 4/5 remain. Discounted because it did not address the non compliant access to platforms 4/5 with the result that passengers would need to change level 3 times to access platform 1.

Option 2 - replacement of the existing footbridge with a new bridge with 3 no. lifts. The ramp on 2/3 is retained and a lift is installed. All passengers that would like to use the lifts to gain access to the busiest platforms would need to use three lifts despite access through a non compliant route remaining available. This option would significantly increase the travelling distance of those wishing to use the lifts and take a train from either platform 4 or 5.

Option 3 - replacement of the existing footbridge with a new bridge with 3 no. lifts. The ramp on 2/3 is retained. The ramp to platform 4/5 is replaced with a winding ramp and a lift. Multiple changes in direction (rather than stairs or a straight ramp) causes issues of congestion for those passengers not using the

lift. A variation on this option leaves the existing footbridge in place, and places a new footbridge slightly further north.

Option 4 – demolition of the existing elevated walkway and construction of a new walkway above the height of the existing canopy, which in turn leads to a new over bridge. Would require substantial alteration (or complete demolition) of the waiting room buildings on platforms 2/3 and 4/5, as the lift tower and stairway structures would be mostly within their present outline. Likely to be costly and highly disruptive to the station.

Option 5 - existing elevated walkway demolished with a larger and longer elevated walkway being constructed adjacent to Pullman Mews. This would lead to a new over bridge to the north of the existing footbridge. Discounted due to visual intrusion, longer construction period and demolition/construction likely to give rise to greater noise and dust emissions.

Option 6 - longer elevated walkway above platform 2/3, leading to a new over bridge. This would require the demolition of the ramp leading to platform 2/3 as well as the canopies and columns. It would also likely require demolition, or significant alteration of the platform buildings on platform 2/3 as well as the waiting room on 4/5.

Option 7 - A lift placed adjacent to the edge of platform 2, with the ramp being retained, and a new bridge being constructed to the north of the existing footbridge which would require the demolition of the platform building on platform 4/5. A variation to this option involves constructing a lift and stairs in place of retaining the ramp. Lift users would change level 3 times to access platform 1 as well as platform 4/5.

Option 8 - replacement of the ramp leading to platform 4/5 with a stairs and lift, and alteration of the existing elevated walkway to provide lift access to platform 1. As no new footbridge is provided, step free interchange between platform 1 and platform 4/5 would be via a circuitous route past the booking office, resulting in those wishing to use a step free interchange between the busiest platforms needing to travel approx. 200m further than those who are able or willing to continue to use the existing bridge.

Option 9 (application scheme) - not without its drawbacks, for example step free access to platform 1 still requires use of 3 lifts. This drawback is offset by the benefits that access to the busiest platform, platform 4/5 is achieved via only one lift, and the step free interchange between platforms 1 and 4/5 is as short as is possible.

- 7.4. The briefing note considers how this option could be modified to address the concerns raised. On whether a lift could be provided whilst retaining the ramp leading to platform 4/5, Network Rail state that the benefit of removing the ramp and installing stairs and a lift means that an open landing area can be constructed at the top of the new stairs.
- 7.5. Also, if the ramp was retained, access to a lift would need to be at the top of the ramp, meaning either a second long narrow walkway would be necessary at high level to get passengers using the lifts the 40m from the top of the ramp to a lift positioned in a similar location as the current proposal, or alternatively assuming

enough space is present, a lift constructed at the top of the ramp, and passengers made to travel the 40m to the platform in areas that would not necessarily be visible. This compares to the proposed solution, which provides for an inclusive step free route that does not force those that wish to use a lift to use a drastically different route to those who do not.

- 7.6. They also state that the option proposed, would limit the creation of areas that may attract people who wish to engage in antisocial behaviour within the station.

## 8. Withdrawal of application

- 8.1. In their letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> September, Network Rail advise that they decided to withdraw the application having received confirmation from the Department for Transport to suspend the delivery of the Access for All scheme for Grove Park station. They state that they are:

*“unable to deliver the project within agreed funding and timescales. The challenges that the scheme presented were significant. This, combined with delays already incurred has made the project unfeasible at this time.”*

- 8.2. They go on to advise that the Department for Transport may wish to re-visit the decision should funding become available in the future.
- 8.3. Access for All proposals are part of a major Department for Transport programme known as the Rail for All Programme aimed at improving accessibility at train stations nationwide by installing lifts, ramps (where appropriate) and ensuring future passive provision for such facilities. Step-free stations offer accessible routes from entrance to platform. Such access benefits disabled people or those with reduced mobility, as well as people with children, heavy luggage or shopping, and the elderly.
- 8.4. Grove Park Railway Station had been identified as being a station that is in great need of improved accessibility due to the high volume of passengers that utilise the station everyday.
- 8.5. The Access for All programme is funded over 5 year periods. The last funding period, of which the Grove Park Station improvements were a part, ended in April this year. Officers at TfL have advised that the funding was likely diverted to another station.
- 8.6. It is understood that access improvements for Grove Park Station could be revisited as part of the current funding period, which will run to April 2019. It is anticipated that, for this to happen, Network Rail and the Department for Transport would need to be confident of a successful outcome.

## 9. Background documents

Short Title Document	Date	File Location	File Reference	Contact Officer	Exempt
Committee Report	17.07.14	Laurence House	Development Management	Gavin Cooper	No

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Gavin Cooper, Development Management, 3rd floor Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, Catford SE6 4RU – telephone 020 8314 8774.